

I have also been around places. . . . I have been in a particular locale or I have on more rare occasions, met a person, who actually gave off, an aura, or a periphery, enclosure, of feeling. You could almost say that they gave off, energy, or transmitted energy out, to a certain distance; some places I've been did it less than others, but I have been places where I felt that I was enveloped, in an area, of movement, and feeling, and swiftness. . . . they were transmitters, they were, and places I've been were, were places that for some reason: maybe not a reason, but anyway, transmitted out, to me, this feeling, or this energy. . . .

All living things have their own time and what Roche has done is assemble manufactured and once-living things that still somehow transmit their rhythm through the half-life of their physical presence. Rubber snakes, cypress knees, "Zorr" eagles (by Mattel), rabbit skins, horseshoe crabs and blinking GE string lights are a few of the ingredients in this swamp pizza. These ingredients are arranged on a mound of sand. The only illumination in the gallery is that given off by the pizza's potpourri.

The visitor to the gallery is astounded to find this conglomeration in an art museum. If he or she has patience the collection soon melts through physical presences to an other-worldly configuration.

The viewer is directed by cues from the piece to walk from right to left completely around the outer border of the ascension plot. In so short a space all of the senses are activated (once a day, in fact, sound is part of the piece).

Roche has always combined natural and manufactured materials. Some early sculptural pieces were ceramic cactus forms, lacquered and set on small mass-produced rugs. In 1969-70 he added plastic flowers, Christmas tree lights and marbles to the cactus-sexual forms he calls "mamas," as in *Transvestite Mama*, 1969. In the drawings that developed out of the mamas, he depended on natural things for symbols—the sun, mountains and lightning—as well as things that had personal meaning to him. In *Loch Ness Mama Swimming Up the New York Harbor*, 1971, and *A Gathering of Penniemama Sky Forces out in the Suburbs*,

1972, the drawings became increasingly dense with overlapping color and line.

The Sudden Focus High Impact Short Duration Human Condition and Animal Ascension: Twelve Symbol Rock and Bone Flower Plot Extravaganza: Sew um up, Pin um up and Staple um up: Highly Emotional Realism Piece, 1973 (a wire-drawing piece plus human condition packets—media sewn in plastic bags—and an animal ascension plot), was his first break-through in combining not only manufactured and natural materials, but personal and universal symbols.

In 1972 Roche added sound to his expanding vocabulary of herbage and verbage. *The Cottondale Kukulux-Klan, Nobody Knows Ya; Trail Boss Protection Piece*, 1972, was his first piece using sound. Earlier work depended on explicit use of familiar or suggestive objects that carried symbolic commentary. He used the weight of titles, written information, symbols and photographs, and their combinations as the fastest way of communicating. *The Sand, Rock, Shell and Seed, Power Pole and Money treed, Dual Catenary X Ascension, Eagle Lite and spirit retension, Graven Image to the land; all in my background: Piece*, conceived for the Whitney Museum, does not depend so heavily on familiar symbolic baggage.

Roche is involved with his own tradition, with roots in the land in a society where mobility is a norm, with magic where rationality is desirable and with intuition and feeling that are repressed in the name of science and reason.

The Sand, Rock, Shell . . . all in my background: Piece is idiosyncratic. Its quirks come from a number of places. It is religious but not dogmatic. Roche does not feel a piece is successful unless it is informed with a certain spirit.

His vision is clear and precise. The spirit of the piece is related to its organization. He uses the materials coloristically. His work has always been meticulous in terms of its attention to detail and order. There is no aspect of *The Sand, Rock, Shell . . . all in my background: Piece* that is random; it is a completely controlled environment, which leaves no ambiguous space between the gallery and the lobby.

The entire space of the gallery is considered. The

piece is formed by an ellipse, which looks round to a viewer standing any place in the room. It has an opening at the entrance of the gallery and is divided by four radii. Its various levels are articulated by the rocks, the mounds and poles with gourds. "Zorr" eagles flying from the ceiling protect the plot. The Wolfagator serves as a guardian to the inner ascension plot. The ascension plot, as the holy altar, is reached through levels and series of visual barriers. Shucked corn, placed around the edges, is expected to sprout by the end of the exhibition. Water to germinate the corn is supplied by the yellow sand on the periphery. Wired-together rocks form a scalloped edge which creates a rhythm and protects the fragile plot.

We live in a world with so much supplied information that real feelings must continuously work uphill to avoid overstimulated numbness. Roche's *The Sand, Rock, Shell . . . all in my background: Piece* is working to put the whammy on this overload.

Roche is playing with the contradiction of the graven image. By translating a ritual from the invisible world of his own mind to the invisible nervous system of the viewer through artifice, Roche has "in these graven images in this floor area . . . put up objects that antennae, and sought out, to give occurrences, and they sought out spirits, and I had a object to do that."

Elke M. Solomon
Associate Curator,
Prints and Drawings

JIM ROCHE

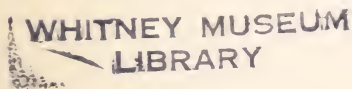
Born in Jackson County, Florida, in 1943. Studied at Florida State University (BA, 1966), University of Dallas (MA, 1968; MFA, 1970). He lives in Tallahassee, Florida; his art business address is P.O. Box 881, Tallahassee, Florida 32302.

Group Exhibitions

- 1969 "Small Sculpture," Clean Well Lighted Place Gallery, Austin
- 1970 "Like Peas in a Pod," One Main Place Complex, Dallas; "Project South by Southwest," Fort Worth Art Center Museum; "Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- 1971 "Drawings 1970-71," Janie C. Lee Gallery, Dallas; "Six Major Pieces by Six Young Sculptors," Clean Well Lighted Place Gallery, Austin; "South Texas Sweet Funk," St. Edwards University, Austin; "Texas Painting and Sculpture," Dallas Museum of Fine Arts
- 1972 "Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston Invitational," Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; "Drawings 1971-72," Janie C. Lee Gallery, Dallas
- 1972-73 "Interchange," Dallas Museum of Fine Arts and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
- 1973 "Contemporary American Drawings 1963-1973," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; "Drawings," Paula Cooper Gallery, New York; "Four Texas Artists," Hopper Gallery, Taos, New Mexico; "Green Mims Roche, Wade," Tyler Museum of Art, Tyler, Texas; "Painting in America: Yesterday and Tomorrow," The Decorative Arts Center, New York; "Two Man/Drawings," Smither Gallery, Dallas

One-Man Exhibitions

- 1969 "Potted Mama Plants," University of Dallas
- 1974 "Return to Florida Piece," Florida State University, Tallahassee



Catalogue

The Sand, Rock, Shell and Seed, Power Pole and Money treed, Dual Catenary X Ascension, Eagle Lite and spirit retension, Graven Image to the land; all in my background: Piece. 1974.

Mixed media installation:

4000 colored marbles (#8 crystals)
3000 blinking GE string lites
1000 pounds shucked corn
1000 stuffed cotton birds
1000 tiger spot shells
1200 baby alligators (rubber)
300 pounds bones (dried and bleached)
300 sand dollars
250 pink conch shells
200 5-point "Sea Stars" star fish (6-8")
200 Florida slash pine cones (7")

200 12-inch rubber snakes
150 horseshoe crabs
120 large (36") rubber snakes
100 soccer-ball-size rocks (limestone)
70 dried hard shell gourds
60 rabbit skins (18 x 12" approximate)
50 bleached shark jaws
50 cypress knees
40 "Zorr" eagles (Mattel toys)
30 12-foot power poles (painted)
10 dried and stuffed turtles
10 gross plastic long stem roses
5 cubic yards yellow masonry sand
5 pounds crushed mica (flake form)
2 cubic yards oyster shells (shucked)
1 gross orange rubber crabs
Plus film, glitter and tape recordings



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Whitney Museum of American Art

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Photographs by Michael Hunter